



SENTENCING IN WISCONSIN

Snapshots of Information on Wisconsin Sentencing

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Crime Mapping: A Presentation on Sentencing Trends & Patterns*Jim Pingel, Wisconsin Office of Justice Assistance*

The New York Police Department was the first agency, in the mid-nineties, to receive widespread, mainstream attention for using computer mapping, or GIS (geographical information systems) as part of its CompStat process of holding managers accountable for results. Sometime between the time when wall-sized pin maps dominated detectives' rooms across the country, and the time when computerized crime-mapping went prime-time with the debut of the TV series *The District*, GIS became a mainstay as a legitimate tactical and strategic tool in policing.

December 1997 is as good a date as any. That was the first time that the US Department of Justice's National Institute of Justice hosted a Crime Mapping Research Conference. The 8th such conference was held September 8-10 in Savannah, Georgia. One of the noticeable trends over the years has been the adoption of computer-mapping by other sectors in criminal justice, beyond law enforcement (e.g., corrections, school safety, and even prosecution). This year's conference included a full track on corrections. Part of that track was a presentation by the Wisconsin Sentencing Commission's former Deputy Director on the role of mapping in the analysis of sentencing trends and patterns, a copy of which can be found on the Commission's website.

This presentation gave participants a general overview of sentencing commissions, emphasizing their typical broad-based membership, and strong research and analysis component to their missions and roles. Crime mapping focuses on the environmental factors related to crime, and the spatial patterns with which crime occurs.

Sentencing, which happens in a courthouse, does not have such a specific geographic reference. And we seldom relate sentencing patterns back to any geographic reference other than judicial jurisdiction. However, the point of this presentation was that mapping certain sentencing measures by county offers sentencing commissions another means of

distilling knowledge out of what is typically very complex data.

It also provides an opportunity to combine sentencing data with crime and arrest reports, as the Wisconsin Commission did with drug cases and drug arrests from the Uniform Crime Reports. This was described as a way to capitalize on the broad-based membership of sentencing commissions, and put sentencing issues in the broader context of crime incidence.

Finally, conference participants were reminded that sentencing commissions can be both a potential source of additional data for traditional crime-mappers, and a place to raise broader criminal justice policy issues.

Additional criminal-justice mapping resources:

[MAPS - The NIJ's Mapping & Analysis for Public Safety Program](#). Conference proceedings, including the presentation described above, are available here.

[The Reentry Mapping Network](#), an Urban Institute's program that includes a Milwaukee research project. A [vendor website](#) that provides a comprehensive collection of case studies, papers and funding opportunities.

[Milwaukee COMPASS](#), a community mapping project initially funded by NIJ.

The Wisconsin Sentencing Commission periodically publishes "Sentencing in Wisconsin" to provide the public, state courts, and policymakers data on state sentencing practices. For other publications, or more information about the Commission, see its website, <http://wsc.wi.gov>